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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ ELECTIONS SECURITY LAW;
BAGHDAD

1. SUMMARY: The major themes in the daily newspapers on July 21 were the Sunnis withdrawal from the constitutional committee, the constitutional committee's preparations for the referendum and drafting the constitution, and the latest developments of the security situation. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

- 1A. "Electoral districts" (7/21)

Al-Adala (affiliated with SCIRI led by Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim) published a third-page editorial by Ali Khalif about the upcoming elections:

"Our government made a legitimate demand when it requested that all Iraqis participate in the electoral process and vote. Everyone in Iraq should see the wisdom of this request and work to make our elections successful. Last January, Iraq had a great election. It was based upon the principle that Iraq is one electoral district.

However, there are some groups that doubt the fairness of our January elections. They maintain that because many Iraqis didn't participate in that election it wasn't a success. For this reason, many political groups have called for splitting Iraq up into multiple electoral districts. In this way, they maintain, all provinces will be represented and nobody can thwart the upcoming elections.

This will equalize all provinces because it will put an end to the issue of majority and minority representation. Each province will have its spokesperson represented in the national assembly. These representatives will have a voice in affairs of the government and parliament. They will be able to put pressure on the government in the name of the people they represent.

In this way, we will be able have fair representation in the national assembly. Meanwhile, we have to keep in mind that each province must be represented according to its population. This system will ensure full participation and fairness in elections."

- 1B. "Patient Iraqis and the marginalized law" (7/21)

Ad-Dustoor (independent) published a front-page editorial by Bassem Al-Sheikh about the current Iraqi situation:

"According to the latest poll, there are about 23 intelligence agencies deployed in Iraq to destroy the country and kill Iraqi people.

Iraq used to have Articles 156 through 228 of the "Law of Penalties" to protect them from such agencies, but Paul Bremer suspended that law in one of his resolutions.

The articles in question states that anyone proved to be involved in treason, espionage, information leaks, providing assistance or consultation to any foreign group to wage war on Iraq will be strictly punished.

This order was judged unjustifiable after the alleged power transfer to Iraqis. Yet, its suspension has made Iraq an open field for intelligence agencies of all kinds from all countries.

Bremer's order has fed terrorism and helped make it grow. Due to the absence of strong governments in the region our neighbors have seized this opportunity and destroyed Iraq mercilessly while our politicians are protected from the law.

Saddam did not draft the "Law of Penalties." It was drafted eighty years ago. It seems that our politicians do not care about the dangers of ignoring those important articles. Ignoring them will lead to terrorism that targets Iraq's national, scientific and religious symbols. In addition, it will disrupt Iraq's security, its unity, its religion and its identity. Iraq's new politicians, who came with the foreign troops, protect themselves from the Iraqi law-by ignoring it.

Our officials discount the idea that strong security can only be achieved by the presence of a strong and punitive law. They are busy with security issues. They treat the symptoms of terrorism rather than eradicate its causes. These intelligence agencies and their secret organizations have and will establish positions in Iraq. They will have strong lobbies in the government that cannot be ignored. The executive apparatuses must be effective in their performances to achieve security. However, the patient Iraqi has nothing to do but pray to god and the national assembly. The patient Iraqi hopes that the national assembly will be an effective legislative institution that can maintain security. This can only be done by activating suspended articles and drafting new ones. May god keep Iraq from spies and traitors."

SATTERFIELD